

THE AMERICAN  
NATIONAL PREACHER.

Nos. 1 & 2. VOL. 10.] JUNE & JULY, 1835. [WHOLE No. 110.

SERMONS CXC—CXCIV.

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THE NATURE, IMPORTANCE, AND MEANS OF EMINENT HOLINESS  
THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH.

Matt. xvi. 3. *Can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

Rom. xiv. 17. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

Luke xvii. 20, 21. *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or to there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*

Isaiah lii. 1, 2. *Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.*

In the progress of the cause of God on earth, there are certain great crises, or turning points of destiny, full of deep interest to him and to the intelligent universe. Such was the coming of Christ, an event around which were concentrated the interests of the whole human race, and of the moral government of God in all ages.

The advent of such eras is announced beforehand, and preceded by signs. The event stands predicted on the prophetic page, throwing its light into the dark regions of futurity; and God himself, as the long-expected day draws near, so orders his providence that signs of his advent may be seen on every side. He holds up a standard to his people, and calls on them to behold it from afar.

When he does this, it is their duty to notice such signs, to be fully aware of their import, and to act accordingly; and to do this is rightly to discern the signs of the times.

To none are these great truths more applicable than to Christians of every denomination of the present age. By the sure word of prophecy a great event has been announced as near at hand. It is the regeneration of a world. An event which, like a lofty mountain summit, rises to view on the chart of prophecy, as the great intervening event between the first coming of the Savior to redeem, and his final advent to judge the world.

The advent of this day is also preceded by its appropriate signs, which may be clearly seen by all of unblinded vision, but to mention which time will not now permit. And to a great extent these signs are seen and understood, and the people of God seem to be making preparation for correspondent action.

Beneath the inspiring influence of the Almighty, the universal church is aroused, excited, and agitated by the persuasion that a glorious advent of the kingdom of God is near at hand. The conversion of the world to God is no

longer regarded as merely the glorious but distant vision of inspired prophets. As a vivid reality, and near even at the door, it rises in all its majesty and soul-exciting power before the mind, awakening intense desire, and urging to incessant effort. Under this influence the church is daily approaching nearer to a full conception of all that is involved in a deliberate, all-absorbing effort to accomplish the mighty whole.

The field is the world, and the plans of the present age are as comprehensive as the field, and the church seems determined not to rest until the gospel shall be preached to every creature. Nor is this all. A result is to be expected, and should be aimed at, unlike any thing ever seen or conceived of on earth before. Not merely to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord, not merely to preach the gospel to every creature, but to reorganize human society in accordance with the law of God. To abolish all corruptions in religion, and all abuses in the social system, and, so far as it has been erected on false principles, to take it down and erect it anew. Hence incessant efforts are made to extend the influence of the Christian system into all departments of life; and all institutions, usages, and principles, civil or religious, are exposed to a rigid and fiery scrutiny. Abuses are assailed, and the whole community is in a state of constant agitation. Nor is this state of things destined to cease till the heavens and the earth have been shaken at the advent of God; till the last remnant of rebellion has passed away from the earth, and the human race shall repose in peace beneath the authority of Him whose right it is to reign.

How great the privilege, and how great the responsibility of living in an age like this; and to one who deeply feels this responsibility, and the shortness of life, how natural the inquiry—How can I do most to secure the end in view? My time is short, the work is great. I desire to enter into it with all my heart and soul, and to be supremely engaged in some department of action. Which shall I select?

The inquiry is appropriate. A man cannot be supremely devoted to all departments of action. He must lay out his main energies in some one. He needs and must have a ruling passion; an all-absorbing purpose of the soul, of power to draw all else into its current, and render all else subservient to itself. And the natural course is to select some one of the great enterprises of the present age, and throw into that all the energies of the soul. Nor is it difficult to find an enterprise large enough to absorb the whole soul. Any one is vast enough to give exercise to more than all the energies of the highest mind, and, to him who meditates much and deeply on it, to fill the whole horizon of his vision, and to seem more intimately connected than any other with the salvation of the world. Thus to one the cause of Sabbath-schools may easily become the most important of all; to another, foreign or domestic missions; to another, the discussion and defence of doctrinal truth, and the exposure of error; to another, the abolition of slavery; and to another, the circulation of tracts, or of the word of God. These and similar enterprises are, without doubt, great and glorious beyond conception. But neither one of them is or can become the leading and most important enterprise of the present age. Neither one of them can deserve to become the all-absorbing object of the soul, nor can safely so become.

This prominence belongs to one enterprise and only one. An enterprise at present not at all recognised as a great enterprise of the age, or as an enterprise at all; and on which public apathy is deep and general. Yet, on reflection, it must be seen to be the only one which deserves the first rank, and the only one to which it is safe to give supreme and all-absorbing power in the soul, so as to compel us to view all other subjects only in their relations to it. The enterprise to which I refer is this:—

THE IMMEDIATE PRODUCTION OF AN ELEVATED STANDARD OF PERSONAL HOLINESS THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH—SUCH A STANDARD OF HOLINESS AS GOD REQUIRES, AND THE PRESENT EXIGENCIES OF THE WORLD DEMAND.

That such a standard of holiness *ought* to exist cannot be denied; that it will exist *hereafter* is expected. But its indispensable necessity *now, this very day*, is not felt as it ought to be, nor the possibility of producing it; and adequate efforts to secure it are not made. These things ought not so to be. The attention of the whole church should be at once aroused to the subject and fixed intently on it, and the work of producing such a standard of holiness deliberately undertaken, as the first great enterprise of the present day. That it is such is the obvious import of our text. It teaches us that the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, that its advent depends on no secular power, and implies no worldly victories, no external splendor, no earthly dominions, but simply that reign of God over man which is the result of holiness in the soul. From this it is manifest that the kingdom of God can make no real progress except by an increase of holiness, and can never be fully established on earth till holiness prevails in its highest power. Of course, to secure such a prevalence of holiness ought to be the great business of the present day. Still further to illustrate this truth, I propose

I. To consider what is implied in a standard of holiness adapted to the exigencies of the present age.

II. Show that to produce such a standard of holiness should be regarded as the most important enterprise of the age.

III. Show how this enterprise should be undertaken and conducted.

In general, we remark that the standard of holiness required by the present age should be distinguished by two great peculiarities—that it should *include all parts of a holy character*, and that these should be *fully developed* so as to exert *a high degree of power*. In other words, the exigencies of the age require a COMPLETE, FULLY-DEVELOPED, AND WELL-BALANCED holy character. Let us now proceed to look in detail at the elementary parts of this.

1. Communion with God deserves a prominent place, as at the foundation of all high attainments in holiness.

By communion with God I understand an interchange or reciprocal exercise of views and feelings between God and the soul, when, according to his promise, he draws near, and manifests himself to those who love him.

This is both a reasonable and intelligible state of mind. Men are so made that they can exchange with each other both views and emotions, and this is essential to the highest degree of love and mutual confidence. And the same is no less true of the relations that exist between men and God. He is a holy being, and has infinite intellect and emotions, and if emotions exist in us of a corresponding kind, there is a rational basis laid for union with him, not only in views but in emotions. Hence it is said, "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." And all Christians familiarly speak of this state of mind as involving *a sense of the presence of God*. It was this state of mind which David desired when he longed, and thirsted, and fainted after God, and which he actually enjoyed when he said, "thy loving kindness is better than life," and spoke of his soul as "satisfied with marrow and fatness" while in a state of joyful communion with God, and when he exclaimed, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee."

This is the very foundation of all high attainments in holiness. The great and fundamental principle of Christianity is, that the mind of unrenewed man is entirely corrupt and degraded. Even the mind of a renewed man has no self-restoring power. Left to itself, it would again subside into passions and purposes corrupt and only corrupt. Nor is there any way to restore it to perfect purity but to bring it under the renovating influence of the pure and holy mind of God. In him are found the only causes adequate to produce this result—infinite power of exhibiting the truth, and infinite holy emotion to destroy the deadness and apathy of the soul. Both of these influences are needed, and either without the other is ineffectual. And both reside in God alone. Hence the whole progress of the work of moral renovation de-

pends entirely on putting the mind wholly under the influence of the illuminating intellect and holy emotions of Jehovah. He is our life. In him holy emotions glow, pure, intense, unmixed. And when his glories beam upon the soul, and the elevating and invigorating power of his holiness is felt, then sinful emotions subside and die, and the soul is filled with all the fulness of God. But let him retire, and sin revives again, and we die. On this point I speak to those who have experienced in their own hearts the influence of holy communion with God. I may fail to describe the state of mind with metaphysical exactness. But do you not know, by your own experience, that the thing itself is a reality? The Bible also speaks on the subject with the utmost fulness. What else is meant by "dwelling in God, and God dwelling in us?" or by the promise, "ye shall know that ye are in me, and I in you?" or by the promise, "I will love him and manifest myself unto him?"

But if communion with God is a reality, to increase it throughout the church is the foundation of all efforts to elevate the standard of holiness. It is by the life of God alone that the church can be made fully alive. The first great object then should be to remove all that prevents communion with God, to elevate our views and enlarge our desires on this subject, and to bring the church of every denomination fully under the power of his own infinitely pure and almighty mind. Then, and then alone, may we hope that the church will truly begin to live. Then, and then only will she be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Intimately connected with this, and originating from it, is—

2. Faith. By this I mean such firm belief and clear and habitual views of divine and eternal things, as shall correct all false estimates of the worth of earthly joys, or the evils of earthly sufferings, and give to motives, derived from things unseen and eternal, their full power, upon the mind, as vivid and present realities. Man is made to shrink from present suffering and pain, and to desire present enjoyment. But he is also made to regard the future; and to gain a greater future good, or to avoid a greater future evil, he can cheerfully, if satisfied that it is necessary, sacrifice present pleasure or encounter present pain. And as the magnitude of the motive, and the firmness of his persuasion increase, so does his readiness to make sacrifices or endure sufferings. Hence, if the motives are infinite and the persuasion complete, finite pleasure or pain loses all its power to affect the soul. And such are the motives presented by the word of God: they are great beyond expression, and beyond imagination. The joy set before us is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and the evil to be shunned is the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. When such considerations gain the ascendancy, the world loses its power. Its joys and its sorrows are estimated not in theory merely, but in practice, as less than nothing, and vanity. And under the influence of such a faith, the feeblest mortal can encounter and overcome all the terrors of earth and hell. And why should it not be so? it is a conflict between infinite and finite for mastery over the mind; and if they contend on equal grounds, must not the infinite of necessity prevail? And it is faith which puts the infinite on equal grounds with the finite. It clothes the motives of eternity with the vividness and reality of objects of sense, and thus exposes the mind to their full power. This has been in all ages the great source of Christian energy and self-denial. Under its influence missionaries and martyrs, prophets and apostles, have cheerfully passed their lives in toils and sufferings, and died in triumph, by the sword, or at the stake, in excruciating torments. And should the primitive energy of this principle once more be restored to the church, no obstacles could resist her power.

Let it not, however, be supposed that such faith can originate from the independent and unaided reflection of the human mind. It is the gift of God, and is the result of intimate and habitual communion with him. To his mind, the realities of eternity have an absolute certainty, and he fully appreciates and feels their worth. Hence, as we have communion with him,



he transfers his own views, and his own certainty, and his own emotions, to our minds. Eternity rises before us in all its grandeur and glory. The joys of heaven and the woes of hell become real, and the mind surrenders itself to the full and overpowering impression of the scene.

Such are the habits of faith needed in the present age. Such as imply a power to enter into the emotions of God, and walk daily in the light of heaven, and to mould the character, views, and habits, in accordance with the feelings and public sentiment of that blessed world. The natural result of such a state of mind would be,

3. Supreme devotedness to God and to his cause. And in this respect also, the standard of holiness in the present age needs to be greatly raised. By the preceding states of mind, the great objects of choice are brought before us, presented in their true light, and contrasted with all else. In this, is implied the decision of the soul to employ all its energies for God, and in his cause. A decision first made when the sinner ceases to rebel, and submits to his Savior, but ever after destined to gain strength, till his whole soul is absorbed in the service of God. For such an increase there is an adequate foundation in the true value of things, and in the relations of a Christian to his Savior. The worth of his cause is infinite, and the obligations of a redeemed soul beyond all utterance or conception; and when, in the light of eternity, and under the full influence of divine love, these things are fully seen, what can longer divide the choice of the soul, or prevent a full consecration of all its powers and faculties to God? Such is the appropriate and natural result of a true view of things, and when it takes place, all our wishes and interests will be entirely identified with those of God, so that we shall have no plans, no purposes, no ends of our own. And such will be our love to him, that the promotion of his glory and the advancement of his cause will become *entirely essential to our happiness*. This is an important point—it is the great point to be urged in the present age. That Christians should no longer cherish a mere general determination to serve God on the whole, resulting in feebleness of heart, low degrees of liberality, and irregular and inefficient action, but give themselves and all they have away wholly to the Lord, and so identify all their interests with those of God, that *nothing can render them happy* but the progress of his cause. It is on this criterion that we ought strenuously and earnestly to insist, for it is a decisive test as it regards our degree of devotedness to God. Are you in such a state of mind that you can be happy while God is dishonored and his cause declining on earth? Can you sleep at ease and enjoy the pleasures of life, whilst your fellow-men are sinking to woe eternal? Does wealth increase, or honors multiply, or worldly prosperity attend you, and do such things fill you with joy and satisfy all the cravings of your soul? Is there in you no aching void which such things can never fill? Where then is your love of God, and entire devotedness to his cause? He is still dishonored, and his cause languishes on earth; but you can be happy! Where, I ask again, is your supreme love to God, and devotedness to his cause? No: we shall never love God as we ought, until his glory and the progress of his cause, are *entirely and absolutely essential to our happiness*, so that we can enjoy nothing on earth whilst these are neglected—so that ease and influence, and riches and honor, shall lose all their power to charm, so long as the main desire of the soul remains unsatisfied. This is a practical test; all can see its force: and all ought to be made to feel its power. It ought to be made the standard—and the only standard—of the degree of our devotedness to God. It ought to be held up before every eye, and urged on every heart. It ought to be made to blaze on every conscience with all the energy of the Spirit of God. It ought to meet every eye as if written in letters of fire on the heavens above, and resound in every ear as if spoken from on high by the voice of the Almighty. In short, the church must be constantly tried by this test till it feels its full power, and is in truth, entirely, supremely, and universally devoted to God.

4. Moral sensibility to the evils of sin, is another point in which the standard of holiness needs to be greatly elevated.

A high degree of moral repulsion from sin is always a striking characteristic of a holy mind. Among the holy in heaven, we shall find not only right purposes and holy emotions, but the highest loathing of sin. Indeed, this is an essential characteristic of a holy mind, and no mind that has it not, can be in a healthy moral state. Sin is truly odious, loathsome, and repulsive. No natural pollution can for a moment be compared to it in this respect. And if our minds were in a proper moral state, we should shrink from it in all its forms, with loathing and horror unutterable. It is in this respect that the evil consequences of the fall are peculiarly manifest. In this respect it is, that men are dead in trespasses and sins. They have not ceased to be free agents, but all holy sensibility to the evil of sin is gone. They see that they are guilty of sin, but do not feel its moral pollution, and they have no spiritual energy to loathe and to renounce it. This is produced by the Spirit of God. The energy of his holy mind removes the torpor and apathy of our own, and gives to us some of his own moral sensibility to the evil of sin, and energy to renounce it. And it is only as this state of mind increases, that we can make any progress in eradicating the corrupt passions and propensities of our nature. But of this work a vast amount must be done, before we can make any progress toward eminent holiness: for in the attainment of such holiness, is implied, not only the formation of right principles, feelings, and purposes, but also the extinction of wrong ones, previously existing. We are commanded not only to put on the new man, but to put off the old man: not only to walk after the Spirit, but to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof: and in the latter work lies no small part of the duty of a Christian. It is not enough that the main purpose of the soul be changed, and that a Christian be on the whole, for God and not against him, and that he organize his life on this general hypothesis. All this may be done, and yet unfathomable depths of wickedness remain unexplored, and unutterable energies of sin remain within, unsubdued. A change of heart is but the first blow which the old man receives, and though in its ultimate results it is a mortal wound, he is yet far from dead. The work of entirely crucifying and eradicating all remains of sin, is yet to be performed. And it is an arduous work. No one who has not fully and deeply engaged in it, can tell the efforts and conflicts it requires. All men are inclined with unutterable strength of feeling to the indulgence of self-complacency in some form. But to come to the point of utter self-renunciation, self-loathing, and self-abhorrence, is diametrically opposed to all the strongest feelings of the soul. To do it is to die a moral death; and the proud heart recoils with agony from the point. It desires leave, at least, to glory in its humility; but to renounce all merit, to be fully sensible of one's utter vileness, guilt, and degradation, to believe, to own, acknowledge, and deeply feel it, and to be habitually humble and broken hearted, is the most arduous and difficult attainment of a Christian. But arduous and difficult as it is, it may be carried to an extent far beyond our highest conceptions, if we constantly aim at the standard of entire perfection: and no one should aim at any thing lower. No one should aim at any thing less than an entire and radical crucifixion of the old man, in all his members and parts, and to put on entire and in full proportion the Lord Jesus Christ, and to make no provision for the flesh to serve the lusts thereof.

But how can this be done without an exquisite moral sensibility to the evil of all sin? To see our sins, and acknowledge that they are sins, is one thing; but to have moral energy to loathe, abhor, and renounce them, is quite another. But all victory over sin depends entirely on this. The whole process is one of self-loathing and abhorrence of sin, and determined, agonizing efforts to subdue it. And why should it not be? How can a soul so polluted and degraded as that of man, so full of apathy and moral death, be restored to holiness and life, in any other way?

It ought then to be a leading object of the present age, to produce a more exquisite moral sensibility to the evils of all sin. No sin should be deemed trivial or venial. All should be abhorred. There should be the feelings of heaven on this subject. The evils of moral pollution should be felt, and mourned over as they would be in heaven, before the throne of God, where every robe is pure and spotless. And if the church will commune with God as she ought, she can gain this also. His feelings are pure and unmixed, and can impart a healthy energy to our own. He can teach us to loathe all our sins, even as he does, to crucify them with unsparing severity, and to long after perfect purity with the intensity of his own desires.

## SERMON CXCI.

THE points insisted on in the preceding remarks are fundamental, and would imply all other graces: but of the traits of Christian character which flow from them, some are so particularly important in the present age of the world, that they deserve a separate and prominent notice. Among these may be mentioned,

### 5. Deep and unaffected humility

No sin is in its nature more plausible and energetic than pride. It is peculiarly an intellectual sin, and not gross and vulgar, and it often assumes the fairest and most specious forms. It is also, when indulged, attended by a peculiar kind of pleasurable sensation, which, though in its results most pernicious, is at the same time most exhilarating and seductive. It is, in fact, a peculiar species of mental intoxication, and gives rise to habits of sinful indulgence, which grow stronger by repetition, and when fully formed are next to unconquerable. And against no form of sin is there needed an energy of holy abhorrence more intense, than against this. It has ever been the ruling sin of the world, and to it as a nation, we are peculiarly exposed; and of all sins, its evils have been least realized. It has been indeed condemned in theory. But no public sentiment in any age or country has ever felt towards it, as it ought. The apathy of the human mind on this subject would be truly surprising, were it not for the fact that the sin is so universal, and so much a master sin, and so rarely subdued. There is not, and never has been on earth, humility enough to create a delicate and energetic public sentiment as to the evil of this sin. Yet of all forms of sin, God abhors none so entirely and so intensely. It is to him an object of perfect abomination, and utter abhorrence; and in his church he loathes nothing so much. Nor are these feelings of God ill-founded. Though not a gross and vulgar sin, yet viewed in its results, it is the most pernicious of all sins, it is the great centre of rebellion against God on earth, the primal source of errors, heresies, and contentions in the church, and the most impregnable stronghold of the devil in the heart of man. Hence is it that so often, in descriptions of the agency of God in subduing the world to himself, he is exhibited as pouring out the vials of his wrath in a peculiar manner on the proud, and as threatening that when the day comes that shall burn like an oven, the proud especially shall be consumed as stubble.

Hence, if we would sympathize with God, there must be a mighty revolution in the church on this subject, and all pride and ambition, and unholy love of power, must become an object of utter loathing and abhorrence. The least degree must neither be tolerated nor indulged. There must be an energy that shall break down, and consume, and utterly eradicate this sin, and make the church what she ought to be, poor in spirit, and meek and lowly in heart. The energy of feeling on this subject ought to be such as no prosperity, and no temptations to pride shall be able to overcome. It ought to produce in the church not an occasional period of self-abasement before God, easily forgotten and laid aside in the hour of trial, but a habit

of mind, deep, fixed, and permanent, a trait of character inwrought into the very texture of the soul, even as it will be in heaven. In this respect especially, should the old man be utterly slain, and his heart's-blood poured out on the altar of God. God requires nothing less; he will be satisfied with nothing less; for the least remnant of pride he abhors from his very soul. In some, this state of mind has already existed in an eminent degree. But never in enough to form a public sentiment on the subject. But it must: it ought to exist in all the church, and become her all-pervading character.

6. Those mild and gentle graces of the Christian character which are exhibited in enduring, kindly and benevolently, injurious and unjust treatment, either from professing Christians, or from the world. Of this kind are meekness, patience, long-suffering, forgiveness, and love of enemies.

Of these Christian virtues it need not be remarked that they are the peculiar results of Christianity. It is the glory of Christianity that it can produce them, and that it will, where it exerts its full power, and no system besides.

The reason is obvious. No other system brings the soul in immediate contact (so to speak) with the true God, so as to impress his most characteristic and peculiar traits upon the soul.

The most peculiar traits of God's character, and those in which his highest glory resides, he himself being judge, are his mercy, his grace, his patience, his forgiving love: and it is also his glory that these exist in no small or limited degree, but beyond all conception of the finite intellect of man. These traits are no part of a selfish or sinful mind. To them it makes no approaches. Their nature it does not comprehend. It is not until *born of God* that the human heart first learns truly to forgive. And as it communes with God, it drinks in more and more of this spirit.

But the work is a great one, to become *truly and thoroughly forgiving*. Not merely to abstain from overt expressions of ill will towards one who has injured us, but, at once, and as the natural dictate of the soul, to return good for evil, and to exercise towards him ardent and quenchless love.

Yet, God requires and expects in us nothing less than this. That on this point our whole nature shall be changed, and we shall become forgiving even as he is; so that it shall not daily cost us a painful effort to struggle against resentful feelings, but the affections of our soul shall flow easily, habitually, and strongly in the channel of love. So that it shall be impossible to provoke us, or take us by surprise; so strong shall be the habitual tendencies of our souls towards forgiveness and love.

That the gospel has power to produce this state of mind, there is no doubt; that it was designed to do it is plain; for to no other trait of character is more prominence given as the great peculiarity of a Christian spirit; and on the want of no other grace does God so decidedly frown. He makes a forgiving spirit an essential condition of our own forgiveness, and teaches us to pray that we may be forgiven only as we forgive.

But on this subject, at the present day, public sentiment is exceedingly feeble, compared with the emotions of God. The indulgence, to a certain extent, of an irritated and unforgiving temper, is not deemed a great sin, so that like drunkenness, it can not be endured and must be checked. It is expected, as a matter of course, that Christians will now and then get angry, especially in circumstances of peculiar trial, and it is regarded as a matter of surprise and peculiar gratitude to God, if they do not. And the amount of unchristian feeling exhibited in some of the great movements and discussions of the day, is alike humiliating and surprising.

On this whole subject there should be a great and radical change. Public sensibility, as it regards the guilt of unchristian feelings, should be raised. The views and feelings of God respecting it, should be more regarded, and his solemn prohibitions of it sink deep into the soul. The formation of such a character as has been described, should be regarded as a prominent fundamental duty of the age. So far from being deemed a hopeless attainment,



it should be regarded as *essential* to qualify any one to labor in the great work of converting the world. Christians should seek for such feelings in infinite strength. They should endeavor to form some conception of this great peculiarity of God's character, and make him their model, and long to be changed into his own image, in this respect, and put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, and all malice, and be kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them.

7. Add now to all this the power of brotherly love and of all those emotions which tend by a positive influence to draw the church together, and make all true Christians one in heart, and you will complete the great outline of that standard of holiness which the exigencies of the present age demand.

That union among his followers was deemed a matter of great importance by the Savior, and essential to the ultimate triumph of his cause, no one can for a moment doubt, who has ever read his last prayer and noticed the prominent place which it occupies in it, uttered, as it was, in full view of all the future wants and destinies of his church. What less is implied in the petition "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me?*" Nor can any one forget how full his instructions on this point to his disciples just before his death—nor how prominent the place it occupies in all the writings of the apostles. Facts like these should at least lead us to suspect that there may be something radically wrong in the views and feelings of the church in the present day on the subject; for no such union as Christ desired among his followers is seen or even expected at the present day. How much our Savior implied in his views of Christian union, it is not perhaps expedient here to inquire; for as a practical question it involves some points by no means easy to be settled, at least in the present low state of moral feeling in the church.

On one point, however, there can be no doubt; he intended that his followers should *love a common Father and be supremely devoted to a common cause*, and that they should *love holiness as seen in each other*; and he intended at least that there should be such an union among them as would naturally and inevitably result from *giving to these causes of union their full and uncontrolled power in the mind*. But these are causes of prodigious power. For a moment, suppose Christians to love God and the common cause as they may, and as they ought, and to exhibit conspicuously to every eye the beauties of holiness, and who can imagine how wonderful the result?

It is a well-known law of the mind that, when devoted to a great cause, we of necessity find our affections strongly drawn out towards all who favor it. We love them because they love a cause so dear to us. Thus, in our revolutionary struggle, all who ardently loved the cause of liberty and their country, found themselves united by a mighty bond of union, under the influence of which, local jealousies and sectional prejudices lost their power; and in proportion as this devotedness to the common cause was strong, was their union indissoluble. But what are the interests of a finite earthly cause, compared with those involved in the cause of God? These interests are infinite, and if properly seen and loved, may have, nay, must have infinite power upon the soul. Before the energy of such a principle of union nothing can stand. It must and will sacrifice every selfish and local feeling on the altar of God. Even, then, though the present intellectual diversities should remain among Christians, yet vastly higher degrees of union may be produced simply by increasing their devotedness to the common cause. Make the experiment and see if it be not so. Give full power to the love of God. Let every Christian fully realize the intimate and endearing relations of every other to a common Father and Savior, and to a common cause: let them daily meditate on what is to be their future union in heaven, and exhibit the moral character of God here on earth, and then see the result.

We cannot indeed expect that this alone will produce all that union which is essential to the glory of God: yet it will produce a degree of union unknown on earth before, and at the same time prepare the way for other and similar causes to secure the final and glorious result.

It ought, then, to be a leading object of the age, to give these principles of union their full power, and to give up every thing which can in the least diminish their full efficacy and universal prevalence.

## SERMON CXCI.

HAVING, in the preceding discourses, considered what is implied in a standard of holiness adapted to the age, I proceed,

II. To show, that to produce such a standard of holiness shou'd be the great enterprise of the present age.

That it is the leading duty of the age to prepare itself for securing the conversion of the world, none can deny. I shall consider what things are needed to secure this result, and show that elevated holiness, such both in *kind and degree* as I have described, alone can produce them.

1. Nothing but such a degree of holiness can secure the *pecuniary resources* needed for the conversion of the world.

The great desideratum of the present age is not a plan of action. The time was, when the church slumbered over the great work of converting the world. When there was not only no action but no plan. And on awaking from the sleep of ages, the first great duty to be performed was to survey the mighty field of effort, and to lay out and mature plans of action. But this work no longer remains to be done. No doubt the plans of the present age are yet imperfect, and will be improved, but that they include all the elements of successful effort cannot be denied.

The great desideratum, then, of the present age, is executive energy, to carry out existing plans to their full results. The vast machine is made, and now we need a *strong mainspring*. We need *executive power* in the church. Letting our plans of action remain the same, by increasing this, we may increase their efficacy a thousand fold.

What then are the elements of executive power? They are *high degrees of moral courage, a self-sacrificing and self-denying spirit, and adequate pecuniary resources*.

But in all these respects, the church at the present day is greatly deficient, and nothing but a standard of holiness such as has been described, can make good the deficiencies. Let us then for a moment look at these points in detail.

In the first place there is most manifestly a *great want of resources* to execute fully the benevolent enterprises of the day.

Not that the church has not adequate resources, if she would employ them, nor that her contributions are not great in comparison with nothing. But they are small indeed, when we view the emergency of the case and the work to be done. Think of all that must be effected before the world is converted to God. Think of the millions of China, and of Burmah, and of the whole heathen world—of the Bibles, and tracts, and missionaries, and schools that are needed at the present hour. Think of the wants of even Christian lands: yea, of our own country; of the efforts needed to roll back the tide of error and vice—to sustain the great cause of universal education, to provide the means of grace for all the community, and secure their conversion to God. Look at these things, and see how little we have *really gained* on the progress of sin and moral death on the earth taken as a whole, in the last forty years; and is it not obvious at a glance, that *much more must be done than has yet been even thought of*, before the world is converted to God? Look now at the expenditures of earthly governments for temporal purposes; look at the energy, and enterprise, and expenditures of the commercial world for inter-

nal improvements, and commerce, and compare with these the efforts and expenditures made to establish and maintain the government of God on earth, and to convert the world to him, and *are they at all on the same scale?* Do the means bear *any proportion* to the end? Alas, they do not. And on the present scale of action *centuries on centuries must elapse* before the world is converted to God.

Turn, now, from this general view, to specific facts. And here again I ask what feeling more common or more painful to those engaged in laying out the benevolent operations of the day, than that they cannot act up to their sober convictions of what the glory of God now requires, for the want of funds? Nay, I might ask, what single benevolent enterprise of the present day is not limited, painfully limited in its operations, for want of funds? As vast fields of effort, and the wants of a dying world rise before the mind, *how easy to plan*, how easy to show what the *glory of God and the public good demand*: to show how knowledge may be diffused; society elevated and reformed; the cause of education put on a basis such as is demanded by the exigencies of our country, and the great work we are called to do in the world: how Bibles and other religious works may be multiplied, until they fill the land and world, and how the glad tidings of salvation may be proclaimed in every quarter of the globe. It is easy to show how all this can be done; and to any one who gazes on the work, and thinks of the worth of souls, how strong the impulse to rise and do it. But Oh, the keen conviction that, like a sword, cuts the soul—that funds to do the work on an elevated scale, a scale worthy of God, *cannot be had!* I do not overlook the truly liberal spirits of the day; I thank God that they exist. But how many worthy coadjutors have they in so great a cause? Alas, it is a painful, a mournful fact, that *THE CAUSE OF GOD DOES NOT, AND CANNOT COMMAND RESOURCES, AS DO THE GREAT WORLDLY ENTERPRISES OF THE AGE.* For a system of internal improvements in a single state,\* twenty-two millions of dollars is freely given; but to redeem millions of immortal souls, to change this whole world to a garden of God, when was an item of expenditure so liberal ever thought of? And are not such expenditures deserved by the cause? Let eternity answer.

Ought not, then, the state of things to be such, that *any thing which is really demanded by the glory of God and a dying world, can be done?* Are the interests of human governments vast enough to command all of the resources which they need for any enterprise in peace or war, and ought not God to have actually all that he demands for his government, so that nothing shall be needed but to state what *his glory really demands*, and to call for the amount?

Who can for a moment deny that such a state of things in the church is right? that it is reasonable? that it *ought to be*? What does God think on the subject, when he looks down upon those whom he has redeemed by the blood of his own Son, and who are *his* by a covenant of everlasting love, and who have given all that they have and all that they are to him? When he reflects on eternity, and the greatness of his cause, and all its glorious results, does HE not feel that it deserves all that man *can* do? and *are not his feelings THE TRUTH?* The church, then, *must be brought up to this standard*, or she can never see things as they are, or sympathize with God.

But how shall it be done? By urgent and incessant appeals for funds to *hearts, divided, lukewarm, worldly?* or by elevating first the moral state of the affections, and then relying on *spontaneous action*, as an inevitable result of the change? Plainly the latter.

There is a *state of mind, which if first produced will secure all else, and that not by importunate urgency, but by the spontaneous impulse of ardent and overflowing love.* It is that SUPREME DEVOTEDNESS TO GOD, ALREADY DESCRIBED; a state of mind which *changes the self-denial from the side of giving, to the side of not giving*, and makes it essential to our happiness to do

\* Pennsylvania.

all that we can for God. Rare as this state of mind is, it is a reality, and when it exists, it has inconceivable power. For if the cause of God is actually dearer to the heart than all besides, if to promote it is actually a source of the highest and purest happiness, how can we help giving? If its prosperity is identified with all the warmest and fondest wishes of the soul, can any thing be enjoyed whilst this declines? Of what avail are wealth and ease to impart happiness to a man whose supreme end is the glory of God, and who longs for it as for his highest good? How can he enjoy them so long as his main purpose is not attained? He cannot. He will freely, joyfully, and delightfully give them up, and any thing else for the glory of God. If he loves him better than father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or wife, or child, yea, than his own life, what will he not do to promote his glory?

Let us illustrate the principle by a parallel case. Look at that father—His heart is bound up in a son, an only son. He loves him with an intensity of affection which words cannot express. He too repays his father's love, and approaches manhood with a fair promise of eminence and usefulness. In crossing the ocean he is shipwrecked on a barbarous shore, and becomes the slave of cruel men. A vast sum may redeem him. But perils untold await him who goes to seek his rescue, and all shrink back from the enterprise. Intelligence is brought to his father; and now mark the operations of parental love. Does he sit down coolly and calculate profit and loss, and grow pale at the thought of dangers, and hesitate as to leaving home and friends and ease. Nay, can you keep him at home? Of what avail to him are wealth, and home, and ease, as the thought of his son, his only son, his highest earthly joy, rises before his mind? Detain me not, he will say. I know that dangers await me, I know the enterprise is full of peril, and to redeem him may demand my all. But shall I balance mere wealth against my son, and such a son? No, let it go; and as to ease or the society of friends, how can I enjoy them without him? How can I enjoy ease, or friends, or the pleasures of civilized society, whilst he pines in cruel servitude, in a savage land, without a friend to console, or aid to endure his woes? Impede me not, I cannot, I will not be detained, I will go for my son, I will seek his rescue; even death is better than to live and mourn his loss. Such feelings and such conduct are no fiction. Mere natural affection has impelled many to do even more than this. And why? The object of which they were in pursuit, *was to them worth more than all else*, and therefore, *to give up all, for it was no sacrifice*, it was essential to happiness, and not to give it up would have been a *real hardship*, as involving the loss of that which was worth more than all besides.

This state of mind is the great mainspring of all energetic undivided action. It is what is meant by the *ruling passion* of the soul. It leads the ambitious man to give up all for power, the miser all for gold, the voluptuous all for pleasure, and the patriot all for his country.

And will not a corresponding state of mind produce the same results as it regards the cause of God? Cannot a ruling passion stronger than death exist in relation to this also? Is it of less worth than human objects, for which men so easily make sacrifices and suffer and die? Cannot God be dearer to the soul than any human object? Ought he not to be? Does he not deserve a love in comparison with which all earthly love shall disappear? Can gratitude even for REDEEMING LOVE gain no such mastery over the soul?

Oh no, the cause of God does not furnish the only solitary exception to this universal law. Nay, here, and here only it can exert its highest power. Here the whole soul may be poured out in tides of mighty love. A love stronger than death, that many waters cannot quench, or floods drown, and in comparison with which all the substance of one's house shall be utterly despised.

Not only may it exist—it has existed. It was the moving spring of Christ himself, when he offered up his own life for a guilty world. Prophets, apostles, and martyrs, have felt its power; it led Paul in triumph through losses, and reproaches, and suffering, and death, to a glorious crown of life, after



he had proclaimed through the earth the glories of his Redeemer and God. And LET THIS SPIRIT BUT ANIMATE THE CHURCH AGAIN, and there will be no need of urgency to induce them to give. You cannot prevent it. They will first offer themselves, and then pour out all that they have, into the treasury of the Lord; and do it fully, and joyfully, and with a perfect heart. Such are the offerings that God desires, and on such a spirit will he look down with fulness of joy; for *the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.*

The great truth then, on which the whole subject turns, is this, *Resources are not wanting in the church; nothing is wanting but a state of mind which will render it impossible to be happy, whatever else they may have, till the world is converted to God.* Produce this state of mind, and it will produce all else. It will settle all cases of conscience, and difficult questions as to personal expenditure and retrenchment. A holy heart longing intensely for the glory of God and the salvation of man is the best casuist in such cases.

No general rules for retrenchment, or as to the amount to be given, can be laid down to meet all cases. Nor would it avail if it were possible, so long as God and his cause are not loved with supreme and undivided ardor.

But if they are, the spontaneous impulse of a man's heart will lead him to give all he can. He will retrench spontaneously as far as he can, and give honestly, and almost of necessity, to the extent of his ability. Wisdom is indeed needed to do all things judiciously on the great scale. But it is easily sought of God, and if sought in such a state of mind, and in view of eternity, it will easily be found.

2. The same state of mind will also produce a SELF-SACRIFICING AND SELF-DENYING SPIRIT IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE. If our love to the cause of God is so ardent and absorbing, that to see it suffer is the greatest possible self-denial, and to labor for its promotion the highest possible joy, it will then cost no struggle to give up any thing for God. What are ease, and home, and friends, and the enjoyments of social life, to one whose highest joy is found in promoting the cause of God? With what readiness can he give them all up. Not because his love to friends and relatives is small.—*Never is it more pure and ardent, than when he surrenders them all freely for God.* But love to God is the all-absorbing passion of his soul. For him he can give up all without a struggle; for him encounter dangers, and for him endure death: yea, he is unspeakably happy so to do. In fact, the state of mind that enables a man to do this, *is the happiest that a mortal knows;* for it implies the highest possible exercise of love to God, a state of mind which in itself is perfect bliss. Viewed then in its true light, it is a glorious privilege to make sacrifices and to suffer for God. And when the church feels on the subject as she ought, no urgency will be needed to induce men to go anywhere, or suffer anything, for God. The love of Christ, with mighty energy will constrain and urge them on; and increasing multitudes of laborers will devote themselves to the sacred cause. Not merely will ministers or missionaries practice self-denial in going to heathen lands, but all will go who by so doing can aid the grand cause. Merchants, or lawyers, or farmers, or physicians, any or all will go, if plans can be devised by which they may aid in the conversion of the world to God. *The whole energies of the church will be brought out.* None will be idle, none supernumeraries. All will be minute men, ready to take any post, and engage in any labor, and waiting only the word of command from the providence of God.

3. From the same sacred source will COURAGE FLOW IN ITS HIGHEST FORMS. And before the world is converted to God, this will be tested to the uttermost. For we are not to expect such a result without a mighty struggle.

For let it be remembered, not only is *man* in rebellion against God, but his rebellion has been *skillfully organized* by the dark hosts of hell, and will be firmly maintained against all efforts to subdue it.

Let it be remembered that not only is man corrupt as an *individual*, but that the spirit of rebellion has diffused itself into all the social, civil, and po-

litical relations of man. Not that all parts of human society are wrong, but that evil is mingled with all departments, and that some are utterly corrupt, and that this has been done under the influence of malignant spirits, great and terrible in perverted intellectual power.

Hence the Bible represents Satan as the presiding spirit amidst all the hosts of the rebellious on earth, planning systems of vice, error, and immorality, corrupting and debasing the church, and infusing and maintaining false and pernicious maxims in all departments of human society. All the leading forms of error and rebellion on earth are ascribed to him; and he is said to blind, to deceive, and to lead astray, the whole world.

Viewing the scene in this light, and it cannot be truly seen in any other, how vast, how arduous the work to be done. To suspend his influence over the mind of man, and cast him and his dark hosts out of the world and into the bottomless pit. To dissipate all the darkness he has produced, to overthrow and destroy all his plans and systems of error, fully to enlighten the mind of man, and to induce him voluntarily and joyfully to reorganize human society on such principles as God requires and approves. Can a result like this take place without a great conflict? It is vain to hope for it.

As public sentiment begins to have energy fairly to bring up the final question, all the elements of depravity will be collected and concentrated to oppose the cause of God, and the hosts of hell will marshal all their power, malice, and wiles, to retard his triumph and avert their own final defeat. For it is no trivial point that is now to be gained or lost. It is not merely one great question that is to be decided. It is not merely a struggle for mental freedom and rights of conscience, against the ungodly claims and blasphemous pretensions of Antichrist; it is not merely a struggle for civil and religious liberty, against corrupt governments or oppressive despotisms; it is not any one of these causes, nor any one cause like them, however great, and deep, and soul-absorbing. It is a question that involves them all, and more; it is a question that unites, into one mighty focus, all the elements of warfare, malignity, and rebellion, that exist on earth or in hell. It is the question whether *all the power of Satan on earth, in all his plans, and in all his wiles, when concentrated to one burning point, and put forth in one desperate effort, shall be utterly broken, and he be thoroughly and absolutely defeated, bruised, crushed, trodden under foot, disgraced, cast out and destroyed.* It is a question that will yet arouse and concentrate and absorb the energies of a world in a mighty struggle, where apathy and neutrality will be unknown. For such a conflict must the church prepare, for it hastens on. The infidel may scoff, but he who reads and believes the word of God should awake to his real condition, arouse himself at once, gird on his armor, gird up the loins of his mind, and stand prepared at any hour: for who can tell how near the day may be, even the GREAT DAY OF THE BATTLE OF GOD ALMIGHTY?

Whether it will involve physical persecution and the sword, remains yet to be decided. But the church ought to be prepared for any emergency. The word of God plainly indicates that the conflict, either of physical force or of public sentiment, or perhaps of both, will be fierce and tremendous. Who then can be prepared for the emergencies of a day like this, who is not strong in the Lord and in the power of his might? For such scenes mere human energy and human courage can make no preparation. We need that courage and energy which come from God alone.

But habits of elevated communion with him, and of faith, such as have been described, can give us all that we need. His mind beholds the mighty conflict without fear; his mighty intellect grasps it all. He sees and knows its mighty results, and by his energy he wields and manages the whole.

Who then that holds communion with him, and sees and feels these things, can be afraid? If God is for him, who can be against him? This one thought is enough. It nerves his soul, and fills him with a courage which nothing can destroy. He knows that God can sustain him and give him the

victory; and if God be on his side, whilst the throne of the Eternal stands he cannot fall. This was the secret of Luther's energy, and it is the only source of that courage which will finally subdue the world to God.

4. In no other way can high excitement and great energy in the church be so balanced and regulated as to exclude a pernicious mixture of angry and unholy emotions. It will be seen that efforts adequate to the conversion of the world will bring into exercise all the emotions and energies of man.— But to depraved beings this is a new source of danger.

It is a law of the human mind, that when highly excited on any one great subject, the strength of all its passions and emotions receives a correspondent increase. The whole mind is warmed, and the scale of emotion raised. This holds true alike in all great enterprises, civil and religious. Hence, if whilst the mind is in such a state of excitement, unholy emotions exist, they too exist in peculiar vigor. At a low temperature, the mind has no energetic emotions, for good or for evil; raise its temperature, and as they prevail in either direction, they receive new power. How dangerous, then, how destructive, unholy emotions, when the mind is excited to the highest possible degree. They are like the blasting and withering influence of the Simoom of the desert. They scorch and destroy all in their way. Nor does it follow, that because a man is sustaining a good cause with highly excited energies, that he may not be the subject of such emotions. Nay, in such circumstances peculiar danger exists of falling into such a state of mind. And he is blind to all the records of experience, who does not see that it exists. Indeed; to advocate a holy cause with all the united energies of the soul, and yet not permit the mind to be debased or corrupted by unholy emotions, is one of the highest attainments of man; in importance it is second to none. For the goodness of a cause can make no atonement for unholy feelings in its advocates. It only renders them the more conspicuous and the more injurious. Great as was the cause of our Savior, the least exercise of unholy feelings in him would have ruined a world. And though we are by no means in circumstances like his, yet it is no less true of us than of him, that the least degree of unholy feeling cannot be displayed in the advocates of the cause of God, without most seriously dishonoring him, and impeding his cause. The extent of the evil is less, no doubt, than it would have been in the case of Christ; but still it is real and great. Indeed, no evil of the present age is greater, than the ease with which Christians are thrown into unholy emotions, whenever excited by any great cause, and the deep apathy with which they regard the criminality of such emotions.

But if the church is not prepared to endure the excitement of the present day, when the world is but half awake, what will she do in the midst of the conflicts of a coming age? If the first faint tremblings of the earth throw her prostrate, what will she do when mighty earthquakes shall convulse it to its centre?

Is it not evident, then, that the church must learn to endure excitement of the highest kind, and yet to keep herself pure from all sinful emotions, before she is prepared to convert the world to God? And how can she secure this, except by just such a cultivation of the mild and forgiving graces of the Christian character, as has been pointed out? These are designed by God to be the balance of the soul in the hour of excitement; nay, they are so in God himself. Much as he is moved, he never ceases to be patient and kind. These traits of character in him are as infinite as his energy is great in other respects. And the same balance ought to be preserved in the church. She ought to be just as patient, and long-suffering, and gentle, and tender, and kind, as she is energetic, and bold, and courageous. It is not, indeed, common to unite these apparently opposite traits in equal degrees, and to some they seem incompatible. But they are not. They are both essential parts of the highest degree of holiness. They are both united in God. Nor do they tend in the least to weaken each other. The highest degree of courage

and energy cannot exist except in a meek, patient, and lowly mind. In such a mind its energies are undivided. No anger, or suspicion, or envy, divides or distracts them. They are all kept pure, and expend their united power in promoting the cause of God.

Indeed, this is the great secret of the highest possible degree of moral power. Let a man be in this state of mind, and personal insults have lost their power to agitate or confuse. He looks calmly at the truth with unclouded vision; he sees what the public good requires, and that, sustained by the energy of omnipotence, he calmly but decidedly resolves to do. By attacks on his personal interests, he can neither be excited nor provoked. All such things he overlooks and forgets, intent only to promote the glory of God and the welfare of man. But let the cause of God be assailed, and all the energies of his soul awake, and, in perfect consistency with the utmost meekness and mildness, he exhibits a courage which nothing can daunt or subdue.

Such is the style of character demanded in all who would engage in the great work of converting the world. And how can it be attained but by elevating to the highest possible extent, the standard of holiness in the church, and by aiming at humility, meekness, patience, and long-suffering, in the highest degree? So that these traits of character shall exert a decisive and controlling power on the public mind, and thoroughly imbue all the maxims, plans, principles, and associations of the day, with their own all-pervading character. *Nothing short of this can do it, and nothing short of this should be done.* So that harmony and brotherly love shall be expected, in all assemblies of Christians, and especially of ministers, as a matter of course, and not be regarded as an astonishing event, and a cause of peculiar thanksgiving to God. Do we ever hear ministers thank God that they have been able to meet together and transact business with so much temperance, and so little blasphemy, or drunkenness? And why not? Is not exemption from such sins as these, a real cause of gratitude to God? Who can deny it? Why, then, not thank God for their absence? Because they are not expected. They are rebuked by a strong public sentiment, and it is expected that they will be absent, of course. And why is it not so with angry emotions, and unholy excitement? Because the moral sentiment of the church on this subject is so low. Because the feelings of God on this point are not realized, and the deep guilt of such things is not seen and felt as it ought to be. Let the presence of God be realized and felt, and the public sentiment of the church be pure, and such things would not be endured on earth any more than in heaven.—Does Gabriel ever praise God, because he and Raphael, and all the heavenly host can labor for him without contention? Nay, what would be thought of a single angry word in heaven? Would not every golden harp in a moment cease its notes, and all heaven stand in amaze at the hideous sound? Alas, alas, for this earth, but most of all for the church of God! Oh, upon what scenes has God looked down, from age to age, among his own dear people, whom he hath redeemed by his own blood, and adjured by his own infinite love, to love one another. Redeemed by the same Savior, laboring in the same great cause, heirs of the same glorious inheritance, preparing to spend an eternity together in the service of God, they yet expect, as a matter of course, that they must in all cases of peculiar temptation, and in some that are not, quarrel and contend in the service of God! For this sin the earth groans in agony, and is weary, waiting in vain for the hour of redemption, and the heavens are hung in mourning, and the angels of God weep. Oh, for the voice of God, to make the church feel as she ought on this point! If angry meteors were to shoot along the sounding sky, and the heavens above to glow with lurid flames, as in token of the fierce displeasure of God—if on a dark canopy of gathering clouds, the Son of Man, in all the glory of offended majesty, should now appear, uttering, whilst the earth trembled at his voice, his emotions of mingled grief and indignation at the unholy divisions and contentions of his church—then



indeed, might his people lay it to heart; and will they not as it is? Is it not enough, that God has spoken in his word, and fully declared his feelings there? and must he darken the heavens and shake the earth, before his people will believe that he is in earnest on this subject, and means all he says? Is it a hopeless case? is this sin unconquerable? cannot the church subdue it, and be formed anew in the image of God, and put on the garments of infinite meekness and unconquerable love? Oh, yes, it can be done. The glory of God demands it. The exigencies of the age demand it. Gratitude to God demands it. And let the church feel on this subject as she ought, and it can be done; nay, it will be done; and the public sentiment of the church and a deep sense of the presence of God, will rebuke all angry and unholy excitement on earth, even as it does in heaven. No Christian would deem it hard to abstain from such emotions in heaven, and immediately before the throne of God. The very thought of them would be horrible to his mind. And the same would be true on earth, if all men had such a sense of the presence and emotions of God, as they might have and ought to have. It is possible to deliberate and consult here on earth, as if we were deliberating and consulting before the throne of God, amid the unclouded splendors of the upper world. Nay, if all Christians had the proper spirit of faith, they would never deliberate in any other way. Oh, then, how easy to do all things in calmness, and meekness, and brotherly love. Oh, then, how altered the spirit of religious public bodies: how altered the spirit of public discussion: how altered the manner in which the church would sustain and advocate every good cause. And how soon would the balmy energy of love, diffused throughout her borders, heal the wounds which sin has made, and give to every work of her hands an energy unknown before.

### SERMON CXCIIL.

5. In no other way than by greatly elevating the standard of holiness, can intellectual diversities of opinion be removed, to such a degree as to secure the final union of the church.

Of the importance of a final and visible union of the people of God, so striking and powerful in its influence, as utterly to eradicate the unbelief of the world concerning the Divine origin of the Gospel, we have already spoken. We have also adverted to the power of ardent devotedness to a common cause, and love of a common holy character, to unite even those who differ as much as Christians of the present day in various points of belief.

But, this degree of union is not all which we are to desire or expect. The present degree of intellectual difference among Christians is not founded in truth, nor in the nature of things; and must, to a great extent, be removed before the unity which God requires can be restored to the church, and the world be converted to God. And this can be effected only by eminent holiness.

The question, how can unity be preserved in the church, has ever been considered one of the greatest difficulty.

At one time, it was deemed lawful and expedient, to maintain it by physical power, and to compel all men to think alike by civil pains and penalties. But by all enlightened friends of civil and religious liberty, these views have been abandoned, and the right of free inquiry maintained. And now, the chief confidence of many seems to be reposed on discussion, as the most effectual means of discovering and defending truth, and promoting unity of opinion. And, it must be conceded, that this is not only an important, but an indispensable means of securing these results. God intends that men shall think, and think *deeply*. Without it they can understand and value neither him nor his government; nor can they efficiently and wisely do his will. And no doubt this world will become a thinking world, just in proportion as it surrenders its intellect to that of God, to be illuminated and taught of him.

But it cannot be pretended that mere discussion is adequate, either to secure a discovery of the truth, or unity of opinion; for want of information is not the chief source of error, nor is mere argument the most effectual mode of enlightening the mind. It is clear, beyond a doubt, that the greatest of all obstacles to the perception of truth are moral, and that these may exist to such a degree, as utterly to deprive argument of all its power. Indeed, men practically admit this principle in all the intercourse of life. They never expect to see a leading antagonist in a controversy convinced, or willing to confess it if he is. They never expect to see one leading denomination, or party, convinced by the arguments of another, of the incorrectness of any of their own views or practices. Solitary exceptions may exist in individual cases, but these are regarded as extraordinary facts, and only serve to show the extent and reality of the general rule. Indeed he must have been but a careless observer, who is not fully convinced that the power of the heart over the intellect altogether exceeds the power of the intellect over the heart.

If then the heart has such sway over the intellect, can the entire intellect be secured except through the medium of the heart? Most manifestly it cannot; and no mode of discovering the truth, or producing the unity of opinion, can be correct, which is not essentially based on this principle. The great truth then, on which this whole subject rests, is this:—

The only effectual mode of producing unity of opinion in the church, is to remove all moral obstacles to the perception of the truth; and this can be done only by elevating the standard of holiness, and thus producing a state of feeling, so calm, unbiassed, judicious, and kind, that such inquiry and discussion as is necessary to remove diversities, shall be unimpeded, efficient and safe.

Obvious as these principles may seem, they have not been regarded as they ought to be. Indeed, the great errors of the present age, on this subject, may be traced wholly to the neglect of them.

It is entirely owing to this cause, that those results which would easily, universally, and of necessity flow from high degrees of holiness in the church, are neither expected nor aimed at, as things probable and easy to be attained, and that some almost deny the possibility of enlarged and harmonious views among all Christians, on all great leading points of doctrine and practice, and of an elevated, energetic, holy, united public sentiment, as it regards the conversion of the world, and the organization of human society on benevolent principles. That these things are not expected is obvious from the fact that the great effort of the day is rather to modify and check the evils of the present distracted and divided state of the church, than to effect a radical cure. Some seem even to regard the existence of different denominations, as the essential means of doing the greatest good. It is essential, it is said, to the greatest degree of excitement, and to bring out all the energies of the church in the common cause. It will not, indeed, be denied, that some innocent diversity of opinion may exist, on unimportant points of doctrine or government, owing to the necessary limitations of the human mind, or diversities of acquired knowledge, and varieties in character and condition, or to the want of express revelation on particular points, or because some things are in the nature of the case indifferent and optional. And that some good as well as evil has resulted from the existence of different denominations, will not be denied.

But that any degree of diversity of opinion or practice in the church, which is the result of sin, is useful or desirable, or even harmless, is an absurdity in terms. It is to suppose a state of society formed by perfectly holy men, would be less perfect than one formed by sinners, less adapted to do good and glorify God, and develop the powers of the human mind. And what opinion can be more absurd, nay, more impious? But, no one, it is presumed will maintain it. It must be conceded that all diversities of opinion which sin has caused, ought to cease. Let us then inquire what would be the result if all sinful causes of error were removed?

First, there would come into operation that natural and powerful tendency

to union, of which I have already spoken ; for supreme devotedness to God, as we have shown, inevitably tends to draw men together, and to produce a sincere desire to remove causes of difference. To be united as one, and to have mutual confidence and affection, is so happy and heavenly a state of mind, that to remain disunited would be a great self-denial, and a longing after union would be ardent and intense.

All shame at confessing error would cease ; for this arises solely from pride and a fear of degrading one's self, or one's party. If men loved God and the public good, as they ought, they would feel no shame to confess sins and errors, but the reverse. They would rejoice to do it, for by so doing they would free themselves from the grievous bondage of false shame, and throw their whole influence on the side of truth and of God. They would see that to confess errors degraded neither themselves nor their party, but exalted both in the eyes of God, and of all candid men ; and God would give them grace to do it, and he is able to give grace to all his church to do the same.

Again, all fear of obloquy and human censure would be gone, and under the influence of supreme love to God, and to his cause, the soul would be filled with holy courage, to follow the truth to all its results.

So, also, avarice and worldliness would no more darken the mind by their blinding and distracting influence, as it regards questions involving pecuniary interests.

Again, the moral affinities of the mind for truth would be greatly increased ; it would be a constant source of exquisite pleasure to the soul, and be valued beyond all local or selfish interests.

And last, though not least, the Spirit of God would guide the mind into all truth. He is ever ready and desirous to do it, if men would but be guided, but the love of sin, in any form, renders them, so far as it prevails, unwilling. Remove the influence of all forms of sin, and the soul freely and joyfully follows its Divine guide into all the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of eternal wisdom and love.

Now let all these causes have their full operation, and what will be the result ? All Christians will see God as he is, and therefore see him alike. They will see the system of his government as it is, and therefore see it alike. Hence it is evident that there is a foundation for unity of views in the very nature of things, as much in the moral world as in the natural. There is but one God, and one system of government, and this is a glorious reality and may be seen as it is, and all who see it as it is, must see it alike ; not because they are making efforts to agree, but because they are looking at the same objects ; just as all men see the natural world, alike, not because they are trying to agree, but because they see the same objects, and see them as they are. Now, the leading difference between the two cases is this, that in the case of the natural world, men are under no bias to take false views of it, in the moral world they are ; in the natural, *the will* does not distort or pervert the perceptions of the *senses* ; in the moral world it does distort and blind the perceptions of the *mind*. Of course, the rational way to cause men to see the moral world alike, just as they do the natural, is to remove the cause of the difference between the two cases, namely, *moral bias* ; and to cultivate eminent holiness, is not only an effectual way, but it is the only way to do this ; moreover to deny that Christians in a holy and unbiassed state of mind may arrive at harmonious views, is to limit the power of God to guide his people alike.

To reason from the past then, and to infer that because all Christians have disagreed, they can never agree, is neither scriptural or philosophical. The most powerful means of producing union, has never been fully and faithfully tried, and to give it a full trial is the great duty of the present age. Not to stop discussion, nor to compromise fundamental truth for union. Indeed union in fundamental error, or indifference to truth are no less to be deprecated than division. But it is our duty to give **EMINENT HOLINESS** its full power, as an essential means of securing the appropriate results of discussion. And on this

subject far more can be done than is even supposed; for on all the points of experimental piety mentioned in these discourses, all true Christians agree. Here then is a broad common ground, on which all can stand and labor together. Let them do it, and let the church rise at once in holiness and communion with God, and form an all-pervading atmosphere of love, and let this exert its full influence on the mind, and all causes of disunion will disappear, as the mists of night before the rising sun.

Inquiry will be free, candid, and safe, and the progress of truth in the church will be rapid and unobstructed. Sectarian jealousies will cease, party spirit die, and bitter, angry controversies be heard no more. In the warm and genial atmosphere of holiness, kindness, and brotherly love, the human mind will expand with an energy hitherto unknown. The everlasting forms of glorious truth will rise before the minds of all, and all seeing alike that glorious God, who is over all, and in all, and through all, will be united to one Lord by the ties of a common faith, through the one inward baptism of the Holy Ghost.

In what particulars and to what extent the opinions and practices of existing denominations would be modified by the change, time only can show. One thing, however, is plain, that the church, in her best days, will recognize no right to make any doctrine, practice, or mode of government, on which diversity of opinion remains, if any such there should be, an essential term of communion and fraternal intercourse, since this would be inconsistent with the existence of that visible union among his followers, which was desired and enjoined by Christ. It is indeed true, in a civil sense, that any church may adopt such terms of communion as she pleases. But a civil right to make terms of union and communion is one thing, while a license to do it, from the great Head of the church, is quite another. Here none can deny that all Christians are under solemn obligations to do the known will of Christ, and it is his known will, that all his people shall be one, even as he and the Father are one, and *visibly too*, so that the world may believe that God has sent him. It follows, therefore, that no church has a right to fix on any terms of communion, or mode of government, inconsistent with the attainment of this great end. Hence, either all Christians will see alike, on all points of doctrine, practice, and government, or if they still differ, will regard all remaining points of difference, as so unessential that they may be allowed to exist in any body of Christians, without giving sufficient ground for division or disunion; so that the whole body of Christians, on earth, shall *actually enjoy Christian fellowship and communion*, and **MAKE UPON THE WORLD THE IMPRESSION OF ONE UNITED WHOLE.**

The great point regarded by Christ, is most manifestly the *moral impression* of the union of his people on the world; and to secure this there must be some mode of union, so obvious and visible, as really and powerfully to affect the world. In no other way can they meet his wishes, so fully expressed in his last prayer, and fulfil his solemn command.

It is of course a matter of fair inquiry to what changes these principles would lead; but that the principles are correct it would seem that no one could for a moment doubt. And an elevated degree of holiness alone is wanting to enable the church to apply them at once, and to render all denominations ready and willing fully to admit whatever changes they may demand. For surely the highest point to be gained is not the glory of any one denomination, but the glory of God. Not to have all the world acknowledge that any one man or any one sect is exactly right, but to have all men unite with one heart and voice in praising God; and this never can and never will take place until all the church is united in the same great work. For the present divisions of Christians are one of the prominent causes of infidelity. A moral energy, then, is needed to look this subject fully in the face, and to come up decidedly to the great work of *doing the known will of Christ* on this point. The glory of God demands it. The welfare of a dying world



demands it. A holy purpose to wipe off the foul disgrace of existing divisions and contentions from the church of Christ demands it. And the Savior will never smile upon his church with the fullness of divine love, until it is done.

I am aware that the desirableness of such a consummation is less deeply felt by some minds, from a persuasion that important benefits have resulted to the church from the existence of different denominations, and that they will be still useful even in the Millennium. Indeed, it cannot be denied that important incidental benefits have arisen from the existence of different denominations, *in a low state of piety* in the church, and great evils have arisen from union and consolidation among corrupt Christians. But this is no proof that in a state of elevated piety all such evils would not be entirely avoided, and all the benefits, which in a low state of piety might result from the existence of various denominations, be obtained in higher perfection in a state of perfect unity.

If it is said that different denominations are needed to excite one another to love and good works, I answer, this is needed only in a low state of piety. It is not needed in heaven, nor would it be on earth if men loved God as they do in heaven. If the original and great main-spring of love were sound, it would keep the system at work with all its power, and all such secondary influences might be laid aside.

If it is said that the union of all Christians in one body would make the church worldly and corrupt, I reply again, this is true only in a low state of piety. The church in heaven is one, and ever will be; and yet, is she in danger of corruption? Is it said she dwells in the presence of God, and beholds his glory, and is above all earthly motives? I reply, so may the church on earth. Nay, so she will; for the tabernacle of God is yet to be with men on earth, and he will dwell with them, and be their God, and they shall be his people.

The fact is, that the assumption of the necessity of a permanently low state of piety on earth is the only basis on which such arguments for the necessity of different denominations can have any power; and remove their basis, and they must fall with it.

Now, what right has any man to make such an assumption? Has the church a right for a moment to remain in her present low state of piety? Who dares affirm it? Does not God command her to be holy as he is? We know he does. Is he not grieved, wounded, dishonored, and offended, by the present low state of piety in the church? We know he is. Ought not the church to make efforts to remove it, decided, vigorous, all-absorbing? Who can deny it? And if she does, will not God bless them? And if he does, will she not gain the result? Will not Zion arise from the dust, and put on her beautiful garments, and shine forth fair as the moon, and clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners? After all, here is the great turning point of the whole subject. It all concentrates here. The views of the church on this subject are low, deplorably low. There is no faith at all as to what might be, and ought to be, and would be, if the church would deliberately and decidedly make the honest effort, with full purpose of soul to do her duty to God, and be holy as he is holy. And, till this is done, all else is vain; there is no power in argument to grapple with the giant energy of unholy passions, either in the church or out. The power of sin must be broken, or all else is vain; and this the Savior righteously demands; and from it would certainly result such an open, manifest, and decided union among all Christians, as would most powerfully tend to convert the whole world. It is clear from his last prayer, that he fully and decidedly contemplated this, as absolutely essential to his highest glory, and to the ultimate triumph of his cause on earth. And it is a remarkable fact, that we can gather nothing from the New Testament that seems to imply, even remotely, that the Savior or his apostles contemplated the existence of different denominations of Christians on earth, either as desirable or allowable. They have said much, that to a candid

mind, who should read it for the first time, and under no influence from the feelings of the present age, would seem to imply directly the reverse. They have exhorted all Christians to *be perfectly joined together, in one heart and in one mind, and to all speak the same thing, and to have no divisions among them, and to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of perfectness.* But no where have they adverted to, or pointed out the advantages resulting from having the church divided into different denominations, even supposing them not to contend—much less if they do. All such advantages, if any there are, are most manifestly the result of the discovery of later ages. They either escaped the notice of our Savior and his apostles, or they did not deem them of sufficient importance to be stated and insisted on at large.

But if I were to express an opinion on the subject, it would be this:—That the original idea of the New Testament was open and visible unity in the church, as the result of elevated holiness, and to be perpetuated by the same. But as primitive holiness declined, this great idea was taken up and abused as the basis on which to build a great union, on worldly maxims, and with an unholy spirit; and that hence originated all the corruptions of popery, especially that most abhorrent of all, the attempt to compel unity of opinion by *fagot and the sword*: that after the Reformation, however, the great principles of free inquiry and rights of conscience were thrown out, but that being unbalanced by the power of love, they have split up the church into contending sects; but that when their kindred principle of elevated holiness shall be restored, it will bring the church back to the primitive, simple, and glorious idea of visible union in holiness and truth: and that, meanwhile, the horror of the world resulting from a flagrant abuse of the idea of unity in a low state of piety, has produced an undue fear of unity in any form, and on any principles—forgetting that unity is safe in heaven, and essential to the glory of God and perfect bliss; and that it will be so on earth, just so far as the same principles prevail here, that render it safe, joyful, and glorious there. If these things are so, it should, manifestly, be the leading object of the age to give to holiness its full power, and to wait the glorious result.

### SERMON CXCIV.

The necessity of an elevated standard of holiness, such as has been described, will be still more apparent, if we consider,

6. That nothing else can prepare the church to enjoy permanent prosperity.

That to the depraved heart of man it has ever been peculiarly difficult to endure the temptations incident to uncommon prosperity, no reflecting person will deny; and so long as a state of mind continues to exist in the church by which these temptations are invested with power, so long will it be true that she cannot endure prosperity, and yet remain incorrupt.—Nor is this true alone of the church taken as a body. It is true of individuals in all stations, from the highest to the lowest. But on those who are called, in the providence of God, to occupy important stations in the church, these temptations operate with peculiar power. It was so even with Paul, and to prevent his fall and ruin, his heavenly Father deemed it indispensably necessary to send and to continue a thorn in the flesh, even after entreated by earnest and repeated prayer that it might be removed. And if such things were true even of the chief of the apostles, what shall be said of us, and of other men? Who will be confident that he can stand when even an apostle was in such danger of falling? And that the danger is real and great, any man's experience, who knows any thing of his heart, must oft have taught him. How often has it been necessary for God to chastise him, and to bring him low to save him from ruin? And now, after all that God has done, and still continues to do, how few are found who can endure prosperity unhurt. How dan-

gerous to young men is early prosperity, and to successful ministers or evangelists, that deference for them and their opinions, which is so natural, and the peculiar honor and influence enjoyed by them in the church; and how often in the midst of prosperous revivals is the Spirit of God grieved and quenched by the unholy elation, ingratitude, and spiritual pride, which so naturally result from peculiar measures of success. Indeed, a liability to elation and ingratitude, has been, in all ages, the great danger of the people of God. So that the children of Israel, when about to enjoy a season of great prosperity in Canaan, even after a long series of wanderings in the desert, expressly designed to try and humble them and prepare them for prosperity, were yet deemed in greater danger from this than from any other source. How often was the warning repeated and urged upon them, "Beware lest thy heart be lifted up and thou forget the Lord thy God;" and yet even those oft repeated warnings were all in vain, as their subsequent history showed, and as was often confessed in the lamentations of later prophets over the ruins of their people. So also has it been in the Christian church. When the fires of persecution have raged, and they have been driven from the honors and enjoyments of this world to God, the church has become humble. But so soon as this external pressure has been taken off, and the natural tendencies of the heart have had opportunity to operate unchecked, how soon has she forgotten God in the elation of pride, and through her wanderings from him become exceedingly corrupt. And even to this day the scourge of affliction has been found essential to make her humble and keep her from ruin.

Indeed, the greatness and extent of the dangers resulting from this source almost exceed belief, and cannot be too strongly stated. The sin of pride, is not in its nature open, and gross, and shocking to the common feelings of mankind, but is peculiarly plausible, deceptive, and fascinating. Nor are its evil effects at once manifest; like a species of mental intoxication, it steals over the soul, relaxes its moral energies, and plunges it into an ocean of unhal- lowed and debasing indulgences. And to be keenly alive to its approach, and to reject, with loathing and horror, the very first drop of its Circean cup, requires a moral energy which few possess. Yet such must be the spiritual vigor of the church, before she can endure the state of prosperity implied in the conversion of the world to God. For in this it is implied that the scourge of affliction is no longer to be employed, as a means of producing humility; but that her prosperity is to be like the waves of the sea. And if the church, with her present degree of holiness, is unable to endure even the small measure of prosperity which God sees fit to bestow, how could she endure the accumulated and unheard of prosperity of the day when the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High? This is, indeed, a subject demanding deep and serious thought; for the whole of the great question, Can the church be prepared to endure the conversion of the world to God? centres here. Can she have resources, and honor, and wealth, and influence, and yet remain heavenly minded and lowly in heart? If she cannot, this world can never be converted to God. Prosperity will but be the ruin of the church. She will rise but to fall again, and never can she enjoy constant prosperity and the smiles of Heaven. Of course, the church needs a special preparation on this subject, and one adapted to the age in which we live, and to the prospects before us. No common degree of humility will suffice. A character must be formed of humility, so pure, deep, and strong, as to endure even the trial of millennial prosperity. And it can be done. For if pride can be excluded from heaven, and if the church can be prepared to endure eternal prosperity there, and yet remain pure and lowly in heart, cannot the same results be produced by the presence of God, and by breathing the atmosphere of heaven, even on earth? It may be: it will be: for such is the promise of God.

It is a duty that God himself demands the church no longer to evade. And

if suitable efforts are made, and the presence and aid of God implored, the work can now be done, and the church can be redeemed from a sin so odious, so degrading, so destructive. Her public sentiment may be made energetic and pure. To seek the approbation of God only, and to adore God alone—to be pure, meek, and lowly in heart, may become the constant, habitual, and delightful state of mind throughout the church, and to loathe with horror infinite the least defilement of pride. Then will prosperity, however great, have no power to corrupt. So intimate will be the communion of the church with God—so clear her views of eternal things—so deep her sense of the utter vanity of worldly distinction and human praise, that temptations such as few can now resist, will be stripped of all their power—the baseness, the pollutions, and the ingratitude, the unnumbered evils of pride, will be so fully seen and deeply felt, that the whole soul of the church will be turned against it as with the energy of omnipotence.

7. Nothing but an elevated standard of holiness can secure those powerful revivals of religion, which are essential to convert the world to God.

That revivals must be more powerful than they ever have been, before this result can be secured, none can deny. But this can never be expected till more faith, and holiness, and union are seen on the part of the church. The radical obstacles to powerful revivals throughout whole communities, are deep apathy and settled unbelief. These originate from a heart alienated from God, and fully determined to resist or evade his claims, and are fostered by the divisions, errors, apathy, and unbelief of the Christian world. And after all the speculation which has taken place, on the reasons why revivals are not more extensive, permanent, and powerful in Christian communities, the low state of piety in ministers and churches, and the divisions of Christians, are the real cause. Were they fully united on all the great truths of the gospel, each increasing, and not paralyzing the influence of another; were they all full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; did they live habitually in communion with God, and in full view of eternal realities, and indicate their faith by their lives; how irresistible the power of such example and effort, attended as it would be by the sovereign influence of the Spirit of God. And, as we have already seen, the same elevated state of holiness would give to the church humility to endure success. But, alas! the energy of holy example and united effort is wanting, and the tone of piety is so low, that the church is not prepared to endure higher measures of success. But let Christian example and effort be such as they ought to be, and let believers be so holy and humble that they can endure the highest degree of success, and the whole face of the Christian and heathen world would be changed. The whole united energy of the church would be concentrated in the great work of saving souls; nor would the omnipotent influence of the Spirit of God be withheld. In Christian lands, revivals would be more pure, deep, powerful, permanent, and all-pervading, than ever before; and in heathen lands, a new and peculiar energy, like that exerted by the Holy Spirit in the days of the Apostles, would attend the preaching of the word; clothing all missionaries with new power, and crowning their labors with heart-cheering success. No longer would the slow progress of conversion in heathen lands indicate that the church did not even begin, in earnest believing prayer, to lift the mighty mass of error, deadness, and unbelief: but the speedy and powerful movements of the Spirit of God, in breaking the chains of heathenism and gathering the nations to himself, would abundantly indicate that she was so strong in spirit, as to affect the whole heathen world, by fervent and agonizing prayer. Then would nations be born in a day. Then would Zion burst forth on the right and on the left, and lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes. Then would it be said, 'Who are these that fly as clouds, and as the doves to their windows?' And then would the voice of God be heard, 'Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all nations gather themselves together, and come to thee; and I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to



the people, and kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.'

8. Nothing but an elevated standard of holiness can produce that pure and powerful public sentiment, which is essential to organize all departments of society, in accordance with the law of God.

That such a result is finally to be expected, is the obvious import of the word of God. But it is perfectly plain, that such great and radical changes in society, as are needed to secure it, can be the result of nothing but an elevated, united, and holy public sentiment; and it is no less plain, that by means of the moulding influence of this, many changes can be effected in all departments of life, which it were vain, in the present state of the world, to look for or attempt. But when by powerful and all pervading revivals of religion, the numerical majority of all nations shall be on the side of God, then will be formed, in favor of his government, a public sentiment, of power to affect the whole structure of human society.

This is the last great step before the entire renovation of the world, and its union in the love of God. The work is to be done freely and intelligently, not by law or by governments, but by enlightened public sentiment. The human mind must discuss simultaneously, all over the globe, the great principles of the government of God, and their bearings on all the relations of human society; and, on all great points, decide and act as one. All men over all the earth, will choose God as king, and base all the institutions of all nations on the great principles of the law of love. Then God will reign. Not by compulsory power, but by the free, spontaneous, delightful, heart-felt choice of unnumbered millions. The glories of his character will be seen, and the excellence of his laws felt, and, as the holy and happy state of society existing under his reign is contrasted with the preceding history of the world, their joy and exultation will know no bounds. As with the voice of a great multitude, and of mighty thunderings, and of many waters, will the song of praise go up, 'Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.'

A mighty battle, will, no doubt, precede this result. The kings of the earth, the man of sin, the beast and the false prophet, will set themselves in array against the Son of man. But who can withstand the energy of God, manifested through a holy church? An omnipotent public sentiment who can resist? They shall be consumed by the breath of the Almighty, and by the brightness of his coming. Amid the alleluias of ten thousand thousand saints, he shall establish his throne on earth, and every system of error, and combination of sinful men, shall receive its doom. If such, then, are the results of elevating the standard of personal holiness throughout the church, is it not indeed the great enterprize of the age?

## SERMON CXCV.

HAVING endeavored to show, that to elevate the standard of personal holiness, is the most important enterprize of the age, I proceed, as proposed, to inquire,

III. How shall this enterprize be undertaken, and conducted? To this, I reply,

1. Let individuals begin the work with themselves. And this is to be done, not by withdrawing from active devotedness to the other great plans of the age. It is not the tendency of holiness to diminish, but to increase action; and it is the glory and privilege of the present day, that any Christian, who desires it, can, in some sphere, act for God—either in the family, or Sabbath-school, or in the distribution of tracts, attended with personal conversation, or in some other of the great enterprizes of the day. And mere retirement from the world, and meditation on divine things, without action, is vain. We gain strength in retirement, merely to act it out in the service of God. Let then every Christian

place more fully than ever before him, the great enterprizes of the day, as the field in which, and the means through which, he is to exercise that holiness which he gains by communion with God, and faith in eternal things; then let him aim to secure in his own heart, by communion with God, the spirit of holiness that has been described; and if he fully and faithfully devotes himself to the work of effecting the conversion of the world, every day will make him feel his need of still more elevated holiness. The unbelief of the world, the toil, and labor, and self-denial, and suffering, required to carry through the great plans of the day, will urge him continually to seek higher degrees of devotedness to God, a more habitual sense of his presence, and more powerful and affecting views of eternal things. Hence the great object of the age should be, not to render Christians less active, but to mix with their active piety more devotion, more faith, more communion with God, more habitual views of the realities of eternity. Like Baxter and Howe, and other Christian worthies, they should not act less, but meditate and pray, and commune with God more, and dwell more by faith, amid the glories of heaven. First of all, then, let each individual begin the work, by laboring to form his own character in accordance with the standard of the word of God. Among other means to be used, the following are peculiarly important: *daily and full confession of sin*, attended by *deep humiliation*, before God, and such habits of reading his word, as shall constantly expose the mind to the full power of divine truth.

2. The next thing, most obviously, is to enlighten the public mind and produce a deep interest in the subject. It is the characteristic of every great cause, that it rests on a few great and simple principles, and those easily illustrated and held up. And in conducting such a cause, the first work to be done, is to develop and arrange those principles. The next is to hold them up prominently and constantly to view, until they excite attention, and secure action. For a mere theoretical belief and heartless admission of truth is of no avail. A vital energy is needed, to give it a quickening power on the minds of men. The evils of intemperance were long known, before a voice was raised to check them; and even the promulgation of the principles of total abstinence would have been vain, had the friends of the temperance cause merely contented themselves with proving their point, and leaving it to the judgment of the community to do the rest. But they did not. They knew that they had to deal with a community, in a state of apathy, deep and general—a community torpid, ensnared, and benumbed with sin, and that the first point was to reach the conscience, and to restore moral sensibility to the body politic, and that to do this, there was need of deep feeling, untiring firmness of purpose, and of an incessant and impassioned exhibition of the truth: that there was need of constant repetition, and reiteration of the same truths in all modes, and in every variety of manner; in scientific discussions; in labored treatises; in profound inquiries; by sermons, by tracts; by anecdotes and detail; line upon line, and precept upon precept; by the press and by the pulpit; by day and by night. The results all know. The torpor has ceased; the apathy is gone; and the community is aroused on the subject throughout the civilized world.

Now, that there is a similar torpor on the subject of personal holiness, none can deny. All admit that the church is in a low and languid state, and mourn over the evils that result from it. But it is a dejected and heartless lamentation, and nothing is done. All admit that the standard of holiness ought to be raised, and hope that in some future day it will be done; but have no faith as to an earnest united effort to do it now. And let this state of feeling continue, and it is absolutely certain that nothing will be done.

Here then, is the place to begin. First decide that *something can be done*. Then inquire what is needed, and what ought to be done. Hold up the subject deliberately before the mind. Look at the present standard of the church; look at the points in which it ought to be elevated; look at the results to be

expected; and form your standard, high, definite, and full in all its parts, and then feel on the subject, and attempt to arouse others.

Ask, is not God interested in this work? Is it not founded in the great, simple, and fundamental principles of his government? Is not its attainment essential to the conversion of the world? If I take hold of it, will not God help me? Is not such a work called for by the exigencies of the age? And as there has been an advance in all the great departments of society, as to plan and action, is it not reasonable to expect a corresponding advance in this? Is not such an elevation of holiness fully and often predicted? And if I begin now, shall I not find the whole train of the influences of the providence of God in my favor, and bearing me on?

Reflect thus in the presence of God, till you obtain holy faith to undertake the work. Seek daily communion with him; pray that you may be enabled to comprehend, and fully to enter into all of his views on the subject. Lay aside all pride, and ambition, and worldliness, and seek only to discover his wishes, and to know and to do his will. Implore of him to open your eyes, to enlarge your views, and to penetrate, enliven, and fill your heart with his own infinite love, and then, relying on his aid, devote yourself to the work and plead the cause with earnestness, and faith, and zeal, and full assurance of success.

The most important points, however, are, that all who engage in this cause, *enter deeply into its spirit*, and have not only clear views, but *vivid and powerful emotions*; for every great cause has its spirit, and is advanced as much by feeling, as by intellect. The same is true of this. To advocate it with energy, there is need of **HOLY EMOTION**, full and ardent to the highest degree. Let this be duly cultivated, and the whole power of the intellect be called in to aid, and the deep apathy of the church on this subject can be destroyed. It is the characteristic of this age, that it is moved by public sentiment. The amount of cultivated intellect is great, and is yearly increasing, in all denominations; and if once called into exercise, can be made to bear on any point with tremendous effect; and when employed in behalf of a cause based on truth, nothing can stand before it. Now if such an increase of holiness as has been described, is essential to the great work of converting the world; if it can be proved, that all our efforts are vain without it, then the attention of the church can be waked up. The subject can be brought up, and kept up, and reiterated in every variety of manner; line upon line, and precept upon precept. Facts can be exhibited, and arguments stated, and appeals made, till the truth shall burn and blaze before every mind. The subject admits of enlarged investigation. It is no common-place theme. It opens to the mind views the most expanded and ennobling, and gives a deep insight into the real spirit of the age, into the whole system of benevolent enterprise in all its relations, and into the whole structure of society. It has important bearings on every discussion and controversy of the age, on all the relations of Christians to each other, and on every vital interest of the church. And to do it full justice, is a work not unworthy of the highest intellect that ever investigated the plans of God, or the warmest heart that glows before his throne.

I am aware that such is not the common impression. It is looked on as a simple, easy, obvious, common-place topic, needing no deep investigation, and admitting no wide range of thought. Points of theory, or doctrines, abstract and metaphysical, these require deep thought, and enlarged views, but personal holiness, it seems to be conceived, is a subject so simple, that it hardly needs a moment's thought.

No impression can be more false. What subject can have more vast or important relations than this? Is it indeed a trivial matter, that with a work to do, enough to tax the energy of angels, the church is in a state of such languor and apathy, that the world as yet has hardly begun to feel her power? Is it a small matter, that in an age, when change is crowding on change, and discussion on discussion, the state of diseased action is such, that inflammation and convulsive spasms are produced, by any and every attempt to dis-

cuss the great principles of society and the government of God? And is it nothing, to arouse the church from such a condition? to restore to her the energies of life? to stop febrile action, and check inflammation, spasms, and convulsion, to remove the elements of disease, and to restore vigor to her whole frame? Nay, it is a work worthy of the intellect and the resources even of God: and that he can conduct it to auspicious results is his highest glory. And is it nothing, to be co-workers with him in a work like this? Is it a subject requiring no deep thought, and energy of feeling? Nay, it demands and deserves the best intellect of the age, and is vast enough to require, and ought to create a literature of its own. Every other great cause gives rise to a species of literature, deriving its character from the object aimed at; and if this cause had its just deserts, it would give rise to a literature, in which this or any other age might glory. There is room here for every power of the mind, and every emotion of the soul. Here is a subject vast enough to tax the whole range of language, nature and society, for facts, arguments, and illustrations.

3. Let Christians of every denomination, throughout the world, unite in the effort. That this should be done, is not only desirable, but essential, and to such a union there can be no possible objection. The thing to be done, is to arouse and excite the whole church. Not to promote the interests of any sect, but to increase the holiness of all. Now this is what all are equally interested to have done, and what all ought to desire, and seek to obtain. It is one of those rare causes, which can awake no jealousy, no distrust, no suspicion; its very spirit and aspect are good will to all.

Now do not Christians of the present age need some common ground, where they may unite hearts, and voices, and prayers? Some subject on which they can all speak the same thing, and be perfectly joined together in one heart and one mind? And have they not such a ground in experimental religion, and in the promotion of eminent holiness?

There are points in which all true Christians are alike, in all countries, and in all ages. They are alike, when repenting of their sins, or when relying on the atoning sacrifice of Christ, or holding communion with God, or meditating on the glories of eternity; when devoting themselves entirely to the service of God, or longing to save souls from death; when mourning over their remaining depravity, and longing after entire conformity to the image of God; when meek, lowly, humble, and forgiving, and when exercising the sweet emotions of brotherly love; in all these attitudes, all Christians are alike. And, Oh! how numerous, how interesting, how important, the points on which they agree: and were these points made more prominent; did all Christians know one another more as Christians, and unite more affectionately to promote mutual holiness and love, how glorious the result. In the present distracted and divided state of things, they speak, and write, and act most on points in which they differ; and their holy feelings are cramped, covered up, and concealed. Those who are within each denomination, indeed, see and love the piety that is there; but by walls of partition, it is hid from those that are without. Oh, that all Christians would know one another more, as holy men, and on all great points of Christian experience, come together, and mingle hearts, and prayers, and efforts. And what can so soon secure this result, as united efforts in this great enterprise?

4. Let those who deeply feel on this subject, speak, and write, and preach, and publish. Great changes do not begin on the surface of society, but in prepared hearts: in men who by communion with God, rise above the apathy of the age, and speak with living vital energy, and give life to the community, and tone to the public mind. And are there not such men now in all parts of the land, and in all denominations, in whose hearts there is, and has been, long and deep feeling, and burning fire on this subject? who mourn over the unchristian spirit displayed by the children of God, the alienations and divisions of the church, the general apathy on this subject, and the



miserable lack of energy in the great work of saving a ruined world? If such there are, and I cannot doubt there are many such, prepared for the work, by the all-pervading spirit of holiness and truth, I would adjure them by the love of God, to make their feelings known. To write, and speak, and preach on the subject, to enlist in this cause the papers and periodicals of the day, and, in every possible mode, to arouse the public mind. Men are excited on every other subject, and shall they slumber on this? Unholy feeling is abroad; shall it not be encountered and rebuked by holy emotion? The public mind is agitated, excited, feverish; and this subject alone can restore it to a healthy state. Will you not speak of it? An alternative influence is needed in the body politic. Will you not help to produce it? A few voices are not enough. We need the united voice of holy men in every land—a voice that shall thrill in every ear, and act with vital energy on every soul.

5. Let the principles of this subject regulate all the *discussions* of the age.

This is pre-eminently an age of discussion, and all efforts to avert it are vain. The human mind has been aroused by the Spirit of God, and the great events of the age, and cannot be put to sleep again. Nor is it to be desired. The work of free inquiry has begun, and it ought to go on, till all errors are exposed, and the eternal principles of truth alone retained. But if discussion cannot be avoided, our only alternative is this: to discuss in a low state of piety, and in an unholy frame of mind, and rend the church, and agitate and divide the nation, or to produce a public sentiment, which shall require of every man to speak and write in a holy and heavenly frame of mind, and take no excuse for a failure. Men feel keenly now the exposure of unsound arguments. But a state of public sentiment ought to be produced, which would make it a mere trifle, to be proved deficient in logical skill, in comparison with the exhibition of a bitter, angry, or resentful spirit, or any form of unholy emotion.

Now this can be done. To stop discussion we cannot hope, and ought not to desire; but it is possible to require all men to discuss in a holy frame of mind. What an entire revolution would this make in all the leading discussions of the day! Men under the constant influence of such a public sentiment, and of a sense of the presence of God, would soon find that they *could control their language and their feelings*, just as easily as if they were writing or speaking amid the holy society of heaven. And ought any man to speak or to write so that he would be unwilling to exhibit what he has written or spoken, before the throne of God, and in the midst of angels and the spirits of the just? It must at last be seen in the light of that world. Why then not write and speak as if we were already there? If any say this is a strict and a severe standard, I reply, even if so, it would be a duty; for God demands it. But it is not so. It is the easiest and most delightful of all modes of writing, if we could but once learn it, and by the aid of God we can. Is it not then worth an earnest and deliberate effort to learn thus to speak and write? Thus wrote Paul. Thus have written other holy men; and to write thus we can learn. And when would the intellect be so clear, or the affections in a state so delightful—when all the powers of the mind in a frame so adapted to gain their end, as when writing as if in the society of heaven? Ought not then all discussion that indicates another frame of mind to be exiled for ever from the Christian world? Sarcasms, sneers, suspicions, insinuations, and excited unholy controversy, have been tried long enough. It is high time to try the full power of kindness, candor, mutual confidence, and a fair and ingenuous comparison of views. Oh, if the church would but be holy, with what ease would she go through discussions which now agitate her to the very centre, exhaust her energies, shed her life's blood, and that almost with no auspicious results.

6. Such humble confession ought to be made by the people of God, as shall counteract the pernicious influence of their past sins on the world.

It cannot be denied, that the present low state of piety in the church, is a

sin deeply to be lamented before God: a sin too, in which the whole church is involved. And that by the sins, and divisions, and strifes of his people, God has been dishonored and his cause injured before the world. The moral feelings of the globe have been deeply depressed by them, and immeasurable calamities have followed in their train.

Now, the moral effect of the past example of the church can be done away only by *confession, humiliation, and repentance, as general and open as her guilt has been*. And no analogy of God's providence authorizes the hope of pardon and the full and free enjoyment of the smiles of God, till it has been done. Deep and heartfelt confessions were required of the church in her captivity in Babylon, before she could return to her own land; and they are left on record as examples to us. And did we know nothing of the future, yet the nature of the case would teach us, that before the church can fully enjoy the presence of God, she must deeply mourn over her past guilt. But the same truth is confirmed also by the voice of prophecy. By it we are clearly told, that the final day of prosperity to the church will be preceded by a general season of bitter mourning for past sins among all the people of God. Whether a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer could now be fixed upon by the voluntary agreement of all Christians on earth, and whether the state of feeling in the church is such, as to render it probable that it would answer a good purpose, I shall not attempt to decide. There can, however, be little doubt, that the church will at length keep such a day, or a succession of days, until there is a deep, general, and heartfelt humiliation of the people of God for past sins. And whenever such a season shall be properly observed, its influence in elevating the tone of holiness will be immense. The world will feel its power; and in the church the foundation will be laid for a full restoration to mutual fellowship and harmony with each other and with God. The true relations of Christians to each other, and to God, will be more clearly seen and deeply felt, and the prospect of a speedy restoration of the favor of God, and of union, and mutual love, and confidence among all Christians, will give rise to sentiments and emotions, peculiarly delightful, majestic, novel, and sublime.

7. In the next place I would add, that in order fully to carry out this enterprize to its great results every Christian should give it the first place in his heart, render all else subservient to it, and see all other subjects in its light.

By this I mean not that we should undervalue or neglect any other plan or object. Indeed supreme devotedness to this enterprize cannot produce such a result. Its inevitable result will be new energy in every other good cause. I mean only that we should ever remember that all other things are valuable only as they tend to promote the great cause of holiness; and that we are under solemn obligations to make all our plans subservient to it.

That this is demanded by God, is beyond all doubt. To multiply quotations from the scriptures, were an endless task. It is the standing testimony of his whole word. Its uniform representations are, that of all things he most hates sin, and loves holiness: and that it is his great end in all he does, to bring all his holy kingdom to feel on this subject as he does, and that he will never be satisfied until this end is secured. The high end of Christ and his glorious reward was to secure for himself a holy church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish. For this he gave himself to death, and never will he be satisfied till he has secured this end: for its absence nothing can make amends. In vain are the tongues of men and of angels, the knowledge of mysteries and prophecy, faith to remove mountains, the giving of all our goods to feed the poor, or of the body to be burned, if the all-controlling power of love is absent. On this point there is no doubt. Whatever else may be uncertain, all is certain here. The whole heart and soul of God are engaged in this work, and will be so till its glorious consummation; and he will please him most who enters most deeply into his feelings in this respect, and looks at all other subjects in the

light of this one. Indeed this is absolutely essential to the highest and most perfect degree of communion with God. He made, and upholds, and governs the universe, to promote this cause; and we can never enter into his feelings, until we give to this subject the same place in our hearts that it occupies in his, and labor to promote it with the united energy of all our powers.

8. Give great and decided prominence to the agency of God, as essential to secure the desired result.

By this I intend, not only that we rely entirely on God, as the great efficient Agent, by whom the work of renovating the church and the world is to be done; but also that we take more enlarged views of what he is able and willing to do, and what we have reason from his promises to expect that he will do.

This is essential to authorise a cheering and invigorating hope of success, without which no resolute and decided efforts will be made. For, indeed, when we look at the strength of human depravity, and the very imperfect sanctification of good men, and then mingle in the excitements of life, and see how soon and easily they are thrown off their guard, and reflect on the blinding influence of passion and prejudice, and the vast amount of self-flattery and self-deception, which is practiced by good men, and the thousand circumstances that lead them away from holiness and communion with God,—when we look at these things, and think of raising such Christians to such a standard of holiness, we might almost despair. And indeed, if it were the work of man to arrest the attention, and subdue the evil passions of such hearts, there would be ample and abundant reason for despair. And moreover, if there were to be no more sense of the presence of God in this world than there has been, as a general fact, in ages past, and no higher degrees of influence than he has hitherto exerted on the minds of men, still our hopes would be vain of securing the end at which we aim. Nothing but a full manifestation of the presence of God can accomplish the work in question. A manifestation, such as the world has never seen, and such too, that the church shall be unable to throw off or to resist its power. After all that has been said on this subject, the church, as a general fact, *has a very faint and feeble sense of the presence of God. Their levity, and worldliness, and sinful passions, and unholy and bitter controversies, show it. A holy awe and reverence of God is not the prevailing habit of their minds.* They think of him as distant, and are affected but very imperfectly by a mere theoretical belief that he is omnipresent. That he is near they do not feel. But God will come nearer to the world, and his people will feel his presence, and be filled with holy awe. So it is predicted in the word of God. His terrors shall fall upon the wicked. They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. And on his people he will arise and shine with the splendors of the noon-day sun, and their sense of his presence will be constant and habitual. For it is said of the church, even on earth, that her sun shall no more go down, neither shall her moon withdraw itself, but the Lord shall be her ever lasting light. And there is no doubt that a vivid manifestation of the presence of God will be the great means of reaching the heart of the church, and causing the conviction that she *must feel* on this subject; for God insists upon it, and she will encounter his holy and indignant rebuke if she refuses. The great thing then to be done in this work, is to give prominence to the idea of the presence of God, and to pray for a full, powerful, and irresistible manifestation of his feelings, wishes, plans, and purposes to his church; so that they shall come under the full influence of the almighty energies of his mind. He can make them feel and act, however sinful and dead they are; and for such a manifestation of God, by and through the Holy Spirit, should his people earnestly pray.

This is the hope, the only hope of the church and of a ruined world. Did we trust to human zeal, how dark our prospect! I know indeed, that, in comparison with none, there is much love of God on earth. But

Oh, in comparison with the exigencies of the age, and the mighty work to be done, there is none at all. Well may we say with Daniel, 'Oh Lord, the great and dreadful God, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us shame and confusion of face.' And with Isaiah, 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away. And there is none that call-eth on thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee. For thou hast hid thy face from us, and consumed us because of our iniquities.' But there is hope in God, he can plead his own cause, and when the help of man fails, his own arm can bring salvation.

Let us then implore him to do it; to exert his own energy and put forth his almighty power. To rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains may flow down, and the nations tremble at his presence. To reveal himself in noon day splendors, rebuking his church, and thoroughly purging away her iniquities, restoring to her new life, and clothing her in the garments of salvation and robes of praise. Then shall Zion arise and shine, her light being come and the glory of the Lord risen upon her. Then shall kings behold her light, and gentiles the brightness of her rising. Then shall all the glorious things that are spoken concerning her be in all their extent fulfilled. Then shall the sun no more be her light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto her, but the Lord shall be unto her an everlasting light, and her God her glory. Her sun shall no more go down; neither shall her moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be her everlasting light, and the days of her mourning shall be ended.

\* In view then of results so glorious, is it not your duty and your privilege to devote yourself with all your powers to this great enterprise? Look at the signs of the times. Do not all things proclaim that the kingdom of God is at hand? Is he not reproving the apathy of his people, and holding up before them the wants of a dying world? Does he not demand new energy, new devotedness, new zeal, in the great work of saving a lost world? And will you not rise at once to the effort? The path of duty is plain. There is a mighty work to be done, and each can do his part. Those to whom God has given intellectual power over the public mind, can throw all their energies into this enterprise, and hold it up in every form. Others can circulate sermons, addresses, and tracts on the subject, and enlist the whole power of the press in the glorious cause. And the work can be done. God is for it; all Christians can unite in it; earnest united prayer can be poured forth; and the whole energy of the church be called into action. And shall it not be done? Yes, it will. Whoever may slumber, God will not. Whoever may refuse to come up to the work; it will go on. But if any do refuse, let them not hope to escape the rebuke of God. He is not, and will not be indifferent to apathy on this subject. He requires, nay, he demands the aid of his people; and all who refuse it, will incur his indignant rebuke. Soon will he reveal himself in awful majesty and power, to expose alike the crimes of his enemies and the sins of his friends; and judgment will begin at the house of God. Let then all beware lest he take them by surprise. His advent is near; let all ponder his warning words,—*Behold, I come as a thief: blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame!*

But would you escape the shame and terror of such an hour, and have part with God, and with rejoicing millions, both here and hereafter? Obey then, at once, his spirit-stirring call—*Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.*